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# Employee

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# Kourtney Mable

## Employee

Employee. (Noun) Who you are while you are at work. They will never see you as anyone or anything else.

In the kitchen of Number One China Buffet, Abel plunges his red hands into the soapy water as he washes woks, his face downcast.

"Get over here and chop these carrots," yells his boss, the owner's wife. As he passes them, Abel's coworkers mutter insults to him under their breath.

Across the table from me in the noisy soup kitchen, Abel sits with his head hung low, but with pencil in hand, ready for my instruction.

"Do you have any more questions for me? Any vocab you need to know for work?" I ask, toward the end of the English lesson.

"How do you say, '*No soy un perro*'?" he asks timidly. I look at him curiously for a minute, then I translate, "I am not a dog."

"I...am not...a dog," Abel repeats back to me, and asks me to write it down for him. Somewhat oblivious, I couldn't figure out why he'd need to say that. He continues, "How about, '*No soy basura*'?"

"I am not trash," I say, suddenly realizing why he was asking.